



**HOUSING AUTHORITY
Minutes – October 4, 2023
Planning Department Conference Room
2nd Floor Rock County Courthouse
51 S Main St, Janesville, WI 53545
And Via ZOOM**

Call to Order: Chair Schulz called the meeting of the Housing Authority of Rock County to order at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, October 4, 2023.

Member present in person: Chair Supervisor Kathy Schulz, Billy Bob Grahm, and Katie Udell

Members present via ZOOM: Bill Wilson and Michelle Ponkauskas

Rock County Staff present: Ilana Eisenberg (Office Coordinator) and Andrew Baker (Planning Director)

Others Present via ZOOM: Randy Wienke (Realtor, no comments or introduction)

Adopt Agenda: Mr. Grahm made a motion to approve. Supervisor Wilson seconded the motion. ADOPTED

Approval of Minutes from Meeting Held September 6, 2023: Mr. Grahm made a motion to approve. Ms. Udell seconded the motion. ADOPTED

Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements:

Chair Schulz mentioned to the ADRC the situations where workers set to conduct home improvements or repairs on certain homes were uncomfortable due to the conditions of the property. The ADRC could try to step in and rectify these situations by making it easier for contracted workers to be able to complete the job. The main issue was workers not being able to get to the location where the work was to take place due to possible health or safety concerns or simply physical barriers (such as hoarding).

Director Baker discussed updated information from Legal Action and tracking the eviction rate. They will continue monitoring the court records for the time being. Director Baker will follow up to see if they will share their findings with the Housing Authority Committee whether it be on a weekly, bi-

weekly, or monthly basis.

There was also discussion about revisiting what the Housing Authority Committee has accomplished in terms of the goals found in the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Report. There will be a 5-year reassessment to take place in 2024 as part of updating the report. This will not only focus on the accomplishments and impediments of Rock County, but those of the cities of Janesville and Beloit as they are part of the consortium. The plan is to hire a consultant to update the report and the Housing Authority members will be invited to participate.

HOME Program Report:

2023 Year to Date

Director Baker went over the current open loans dating back to 2020. Presently, there are 11 projects open with HOME loans, which consists primarily of owner rehabilitation 0% deferred loans. As of last month Todd Mandel with WPHD received 12 new applications that are undergoing review to decide which program would fit them best respectively, whether CDBG or HOME. There was a question raised about how to make the services available known to the communities or to those who would deeply benefit. There have been notices or information sent out directly to the municipalities, with exception of the cities of Beloit and Janesville. The Village of Clinton reached out with specific questions focusing on exterior work of buildings. The entire process is a voluntary application process. There is no match of funds required for HOME loans, but there are certain eligibility requirements. These types of loans are deferred until the property is sold. Supervisor Wilson notified the Committee that the city of Milton has a façade improvement grant available for residents for up to \$5,000.00. He asked how our programs could be used in combination with the Milton initiative. Most exterior work is due to lead abatement, such as windows and siding, so that could be an eligible expense if the landowner qualifies.

2024 Annual Action Plan

There is an approximate of \$110,000.00 awarded to Rock County per year for usage towards HOME loans. The City of Janesville, as Program Administrator, aids in keeping track of funds and projects that are undergone, as well as program income (loans that are paid off and interest earned). The guesstimate of funds that will be available for use in 2024 is just over \$1 Million, which includes past year funds and program income (repaid loans). This information has been sent to Janesville based on data provided by Todd Mandel with WPHD.

Follow Up Discussion on Developing a County-Wide Housing Strategy:

Supervisor Wilson went over various points for a potential presentation that will be brought before the Rock County Board in the Spring 2024. There is information or important speaking points that have been taking from surrounding communities. The presentation will remain short but concise, keeping it at no longer than 30 minutes. Approximately two-thirds of low-income renters are not finding places to reside. The need is comparably more than the supply that is available. Even with this, Rock County appears more toward the middle percentagewise when comparing need to the rest of the state of Wisconsin. Director Baker noted that the County Board is also working on a strategic plan, which includes a goal to address access to affordable housing. Director Baker has been in communication with Professor Deller to work on a strategic workgroup, but feels that it could possibly be overdone in 2024 since we will be working on the AI report and the 5 year action plan for HOME Consortium.

There may be a way to work the professor into the Strategic Planning to take place in 2024 for the first quarter. There is the possibility of bringing in the private sector or creating a separate AD HOC committee. The first step would be to come up with the initial framework and then roll out the information to the public.

Housing Authority Membership Update:

The term for Michelle Ponkauskas on the Housing Authority committee is set to expire on October 14, 2023. At that time, should she decide to, she would need to reapply to be part of the committee again. Additional applicants will be taken into consideration at this time as well. The appointment decision comes from the application process conducted by the County Board.

Suggestions for Future Meeting Topics:

Chair Schulz would like to discuss the allocation of ARPA Grant funds for housing needs. These funds need to be committed before the end of 2024 and spent before the end of 2026. Would also like to review 2024 proposed budget as a whole in terms of what is included for housing.

Mr. Grahn would like to follow-up with administrators of housing related programs and how people are being accepted into programs, such as housing vouchers. The housing he provides that has had to turn away 78 people since June due to being full. Those people have no other options in terms of assistance due to their information on the database. Multiple people have either been rejected or scared off due to past addictions or felonies and/or drug convictions. There should be more leeway to overcoming prejudices and motivating sobriety. The seven people that are in the program have had to face much adversity to get the help to turn their lives around.

Adjournment:

Mr. Grahn made the motion to adjourn at 10:35 AM. ADOPTED

Next meeting: 11/01/2023 at 9:00AM

Respectfully submitted,
Ilana Eisenberg, Office Coordinator